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The Art Gallery

EXHIBITION OF THE AMERICAN WATER-COLOR SOCIETY.



ITS fourteenth annual exhibition places the Water-color Society far in advance of its previous station in the arts, and at a broad interval from even its triumphant position of last year. Upward of seven hundred works are now arranged for examination, necessitating a careful and painful labor on the part of the hanging committee, who have done their work in a liberal and unprejudiced spirit, with a hospitable temper toward every kind and theory of painting. The contributions first selected having filled the available rooms to repletion, the committee at the last moment have added a series of pictures arranged beneath the dado, tipped forward from the bottom so as to make them quite as conspicuous as those on the eye-line. A liberal and brilliant decoration of rare plants gives a festival air to the vestibule and broad stairway, while other vegetable curiosities are placed in the centres of the rooms, in rare Japanese vases spared from the fine collections of one of the members, Mr. Samuel Colman. This gentleman also lends a quantity of brilliant draperies and fabrics to form a sort of bower around the principal door of entrance—that into the north gallery at the head of the stairway—where they form a glittering preparation for the wonders of color within. Small plaques of high antiquity and sparkling iridescence are studded over these stretched panels, so that the old ample doorway is framed in a spandrel of the most delicate colors and bewitching though unobtrusive ornamentation. The spaces behind the pictures are stretched throughout with a plain light-tinted stuff, as heretofore, so that the accidental intervals seen now and then between the frames do not shock the eye by revealing the dark color of the walls. In arrangement and ornament, therefore, the exhibition is a model of chaste and unobtrusive good taste.

The drawings range from the old-fashioned highly-finished, carefully-stippled anecdote-pictures of schools to the most daring "impressionism" of Munich, Italy, and Spain—this impressionism being contributed by American artists studying in those localities. Even the painters of "scandales" are welcomed, and their works conspicuously hung, to affront the rule-and-line gentility of academic pictures immediately adjacent. On the last day permitted for the reception of the drawings, a great batch of Mr. Currier's most highly-emphasized studies arrived from Germany, to the address of one of his friends in this city. The whole budget was instantly taken to an accommodating framemaker, who stopped the operations of his workshop to knock up a set of frames for the occasion, and the contribution in its entirety was admitted by the Society, many hours after the closing of the doors. These enigmatic pictures by Currier form the key-note of audacity for the whole exhibition, for good or ill. Whether right or not in themselves, they manage to put many of the most careful works beside them distinctly in the wrong. By expressing the full passion and delight of a color-impression derived straight from Nature, with no time allowed for the cooling

off of the sentiment into definition and calculation, these drawings, warm and loyal as strains of music, tell their story as musical notes do, in vibrations and sympathies, not in words or outlines. In looking at the finished pictures beside them we are made to feel that these latter are inevitably faulty in not conveying the full breadth and sweetness of natural tones of color, however correct they may be in the mere precision and definition of design. One of Mr. Currier's largest cartoons represents a large gray tree-trunk, relieved against an indefinite mass of warm forest green. The texture of bark, the corrugations and knots, are rather understood than expressed; but the delight of a sud-

den revelation of that integument of the tree which has done living, and which renounces color and movement to hang its broad scarf of gray skin, like a snake's cast silk stocking, amid the fluttering and self-asserting liveliness of the leaves—this little poem of the forest is most feelingly set down by Mr. Currier's mysterious drawing, which might mean almost anything; which might be hung sideways or inverted without hurting it in the least, and which, whether taken for what it is or for a rock-study, or a sea-study, would still carry the same kind of decorative beauty of gray tenderness, making its softness emphatic in the midst of loud assertion. Other studies by the same hand represent fiery twilights stretching over inky moorlands, or tumbling cataracts of cloud torn by the winds above lonely heaths. The most definite and comprehensible is placed in what is known as the sculpture-room, and represents a knoll crested with plumes of trees and tree-trunks, under one of the artist's tormented and visionary skies. The whole fluttering covey of sheets from Mr. Currier's revolutionary studio is well worth having. The rudest of them forms a splendid decorative example, by which our Cottiers and Marcottes might advantageously test the tones of their rich stuffs of subdued iridescence. Mr. Currier has a perfect right to carry the most audacious of his experiments to the academic painter, and say, "Nature shows these values, these contrasts, these color motives; Nature is richer than my most gorgeous combinations, or than the windows of cathedrals; unless you can get these suffused hues in addition to your fine scholastic perfection of drawing, you falsify Nature." That is all very well; but it must be objected to Mr. Currier and his kind that Nature has nicety of drawing too, which she includes within her color-effects without torment but with perfect serenity; and that art is not perfectly equipped until she can show these luxuries of color on a basis of well-considered, easy, practised, scholarly design.

As luck would have it, Mr. Winslow Homer was ready, in New York, to cap verses with Mr. Currier in Munich, having spent much of the last season in preparing a set of pure impressions, many of them made by imperfect light after sunset, and largely in the nature of guesses, but invaluable for sincerity and directness. They are seen studded over the walls here and there, recognizable by an absence of margin in the mounting, and by a singularly ugly series of provincial-looking granulated frames. One of them hangs near Currier's tree-trunk—a sky banded with twilight and interrupted by square gray ghost-like sails, while underneath, the water, strongly rippled with tide, catches the fiery light of an opening in the sunset, and flutters with quick flames of fire amid network and ribbons of reflected darkness. A larger one by Homer, in the corridor, repeats this motive of quickly moving water, sails, and fiery sky: the whole breadth of the running tide is interlaced and lashed with snaky lines of blackness alternating with strong color, conveying in marvellous degree the feeling of luminous moving water tortured with the whips of advancing night.

Mr. C. H. Miller, too, is ambitious to record his uncontaminated impressions, unspoiled by academic tradition and the measuring-rule of the drawing-master. His studies this year, however, are singularly dishevelled and uncertain; yet there is positive merit in his 285, which seems to say to the "intransigentes," like the Arcadian shepherd, "Et in Arcadia Ego!" It is the embarrassed work of a new convert, lately arrived in the country of unsophisticated intentions, and surprised to find himself there; yet the glit-



37.—THE TOWER OF ST. MARK'S, VENICE. 24 X 36. SAMUEL COLMAN.

den revelation in the woods is all there: we feel that a poetic eye, coming suddenly among the hot, sharp self-assertion of the leaves upon a broad, soft gray interval



14.—THE SPANISH GYPSY. 12 X 46. WALTER SATTERLEE.

of mouldy bark, has recorded the decorative impression made by this object; the velvet texture, the repose conveyed to the eye by this broad interval of no-color,

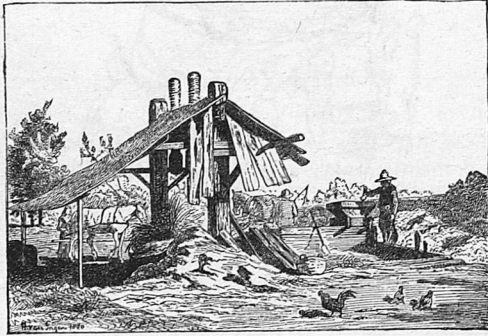
tering, fluctuating vision of mill and cattle is set down with emotion and sincerity, brilliant in vibrational light and pure in fidelity.

After faithfully studying Mr. Currier's disquieting apocalypse, one is the better prepared to comprehend Mr. Chase's method of dealing with the human figure (243). This study of a maiden in black fashionable hat and furs seems to hold up a challenge to the Italian damsel of Tofano (215). Both are modelled with breadth and energy, but the American work is more obviously masculine or muscular; the sitter is seized in a grip of iron; the face is an admirable expression of flesh, in parts, though not consistently treated from top to base; the hat and furs are masterpieces of broad sketching, giving at a little distance all the rich look of fibre and feather, while they are almost without detail, and indeed make their effect less by their own broad ink-wash than by the artful relief of bright gold-colored background.

Among these works, which occupy an intermediate place between the uncompromising directness of pure impressionism and the explanatory care of high finish, perhaps the best are the Venice sketches of Mr. Blum—strange, bewitching compounds of Japanese painting and Fortuny painting. None of the water-color artists controls a brush of more delicate, Ariel-like obedience. The stained, mouldering walls of Venice, half amalgamated with the stagnant waters into which they crumble, are rendered with poetic and penetrating charm. His largest picture (349) shows a black archway near one of the altar-like wells of a Venetian piazza, with artisanne girls in picturesque attire stringing or threading rows of beads. The treatment of the ancient plaster, in blotted color on wet paper, is delicious, and the gay robes of the workwomen give him a bouquet of butterfly, Fortuny-like tints. In other pictures he washes the foreground with tremulous breadths of impalpable sea-tides, seemingly sliding and dissolving over his cartoon; here a group of naked urchins prepares to bathe on the shelving Lido shore; here (763) three gondolas meet at a black arched doorway, connected with a trinity of window-arches, whose black reflection trembles down far into the unfathomed water-street. Other gondolas, other black lines of reflection through limpid and etherealized water, other dissolving walls of unsubstantial shadowiness, are found in his

remaining pictures. Any one of these delicate records is a treasure, in which a most evanescent hint of dreamy beauty is fixed and made a permanent possession.

Like the Carracci, the Bassanos, or any of the painting families of the Renaissance, the Moran family communicates the tradition of art from torch to torch, from influence to influence. No less than nine of the name



642.—OLD CIDER-MILL. 14 X 19.
H. VAN INGEN.

are known as exhibitors: the three eldest brothers, with their wives, making six, the sons of Mr. Edward Moran making eight, and Mr. John Moran making nine, while we reach eleven if we count the husband and son of their sister, Mrs. Ferris. Mr. Peter Moran contributes to this exhibition his fine and careful "Moqui Traders," illustrated by us last month in the article on the Philadelphia Artists' display. Mr. Edward Moran has of



59.—"WHERE ARE THEY GONE?" 16 X 25. H. SANDHAM.

late been much occupied with studies of the human figure, in treating which he takes a line emulative of Vollon's "Femme du Pollet," or Breton's "Glaneuse." He spares for this exhibition a sea-side fishing maiden, in a leaning attitude, surprisingly good when we consider that she is the offspring of a marine painter only recently studious of the figure. Mr. Thomas Moran has a large, highly-finished composition showing the



183.—A NAPPANOCK PASTORAL. 11 X 16. A. PARTON.

lighthouse, the ponds, the hills, and the distant sea of Montauk Point; at the fresh-water pools a mounted Indian herdsman, sole vestige of the old red kings of Long Island, drives to water the cattle which inherited right gives him the privilege of rearing. His wife contributes a number of delicate pages, English and Turner-esque in feeling, and astonishing here and there for subtlety and refinement of treatment.

The illustrations to this article are selected on the theory of merit as illustrations, and in their own right, rather than as representing in all cases the strongest originals. As an initial is placed the beautiful cartouche prepared by Mr. Alfred Fredericks as the badge of the Society, and representing Art borrowing the mirror of Truth. No. 1 in the catalogue, by Mr. De Luce, represents a village belle consulting the old clock on the stairs, as she opens a hall-door decorated with the tutelary horse-shoe. Mr. C. M. Dewey shows a farmer's daughter gracefully carrying her sheaf of cornstalks through the fields. Mr. Hitchcock displays a coast-scene, with figures in the shoal-water and fishing-boats approaching from the surf.



278.—THE FORGOTTEN STRAIN. 13 X 18. N. S. JACOBS.

Mr. Thomas Worth's "Shut the Door" shows the miser feeding by dribblets his little stove, and jealous of every draught of air. Carroll Beckwith's "Flight into Egypt," half an illumination and half a picture, with real gold halo in a realistic landscape, is certainly graceful, tranquil, and classic, if a little empty. Satterlee's "After the Foray" shows a handsome young swashbuckler lying and smoking among the trophies of his raid. S. Colman's "Campanile of St. Mark's," renouncing his old experiments of body-color, reveals in fine transparent washes the wedge-like bell-tower and the painted Venetian sails. Hovenden's old stocking-footed peasant is a faithful, graphic study. Symington's fair damsel playing with a skye terrier shows the constant advance in art made by this tasteful amateur. "Piroska" is a decorative female, seen as to her head alone, by May-

nard, a charming wall-flower for any collector's parlor. "The Letter of Introduction," by Thulstrup, with tart old marquis and cringing candidate, does not get beyond the limits of an illustration, the Louis-Fourteenth background being picked out in white and gold so conspicuously as to interfere with the value of the figures. "The Forgotten Strain," by N. S. Jacobs, shows a fair maiden communing with her guitar. Arthur Parton shows a "Nappanock Pastoral," an idyl of sheep and trees; and (in No. 568) an interesting reminiscence of the late canal-trip of the Artists' Fund Society. 4.—PASTORAL. CHAS. M. DEWEY.



62.—SHUT THE DOOR. 12 X 18.
THOS. WORTH.

tion trembles down far into the unfathomed water-street. Other gondolas, other black lines of reflection through limpid and etherealized water, other dissolving walls of unsubstantial shadowiness, are found in his

The veteran Mr. Cropsey has a sunny, brilliant lake effect (we hardly like to venture on the Indian name) in the north-west room, in which all his old culture and delicate taste is perpetuated. J. Smillie's "Mariner's Well" is a beau-

tiful and skilful study, by a master of every kind of manipulation. G. H. Smillie's hillside, with spreading trees and river-glimpse, is positive, artistic, and singularly well composed. Quartley's numerous contributions show an oil-painter's wish to get his old familiar effects in a water medium. No. 672 is his best—broad, simple, untortured, relieved with occasional flashes of the sparse white buildings among the trees, and carried off into pleasant liquidation by the unsubstantial water-effect in front. It almost vies with Reinhart's exquisite Cicéri-like river path, No. 430, sent from Paris. Quartley's illustrated subject, with boat and clam-gatherers at low tide in a wash of yeasty water, is well composed and luminous; but the human figure as yet does not completely yield to Mr. Quartley's pressing desires for acquaintance. "April May-flowers" is one of Champney's pretty child-topics. Dielman has a better one, however, in a pair of uncommonly pretty children driving a stationary cart with immense enthusiasm, in a garden-scene. "An Old Cider-Mill," by Van Ingen, is a quaint and decorative type. Mr. Nicoll's large Block Island view is full of conscience, truth, beauty; its vacancies of white paper are managed with all the richness of impasto, and well define the thick and creamy foam; but his gem this year is the little effect of mackerel clouds, hung in the corridor. The careful study of "Mount Washington" is by Mr. Granville Perkins, an illustrator and designer of great experience and profound knowledge of effective composition. Shelton's "Duck Pond," Hind's "Ischia," Van Elten's "Tannery," De Haas' luminous marine, and the aqueduct and steep-roofed houses of one of our old-world illustrations, as well as the turmoil of sea-fighting in another, require no special remark.

Mr. Volkmar's study of ducks, with a skilful attention to decorative effect, combines the accuracy of a faithful study from nature. The "Interior of Trinity Church," by Mr. Hawley, a painter of British origin we believe, is a studious and finished tribute to the occasional beauty of American architecture, quite beyond the patience of most native practitioners, and a revelation of the sumptuous and dramatic effects which it is not necessary to seek the European continent to find.

EDWARD STRAHAN.



486.—APRIL MAY-FLOWERS. 12 X 19. J. WELLS CHAMPNEY.

American Art Galleries.*

VIII.

COLLECTION OF WILLIAM T. WALTERS, ESQ.

CONCLUDING NOTICE.

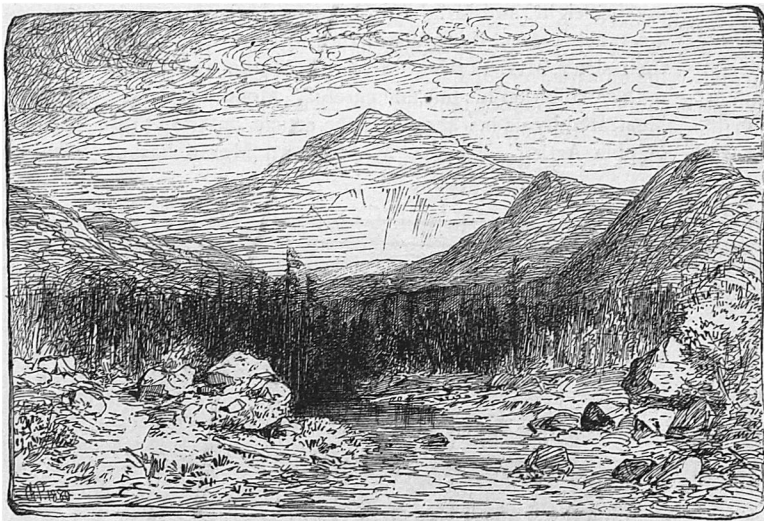
BRUSHING by a quantity of pictures that importune to be noticed—past Vibert's "Gulliver Bound," a crowded epigrammatic mass of character-studies; and Boughton's "Waning of the Honeymoon," a sort of mathematical calculation of divergence of temper, and a subject well known from a favorite etching; and Villegas' "Slipper Shop," a glitter of Eastern iridescence; and Van Marcke's "Study from Nature," a surprising bit of texture representing a bank of grass; and Tissot's "Marguerite at the Well," a figure tranquil, melancholy, and primitive like a Madonna of

Holbein's; and Alma-Tadema's "Sappho" and "Sister is not at Home"—we come at length to the conspicuous canvas posted at the end of the gallery,



203.—THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT. 9 X 11. J. C. BECKWITH.

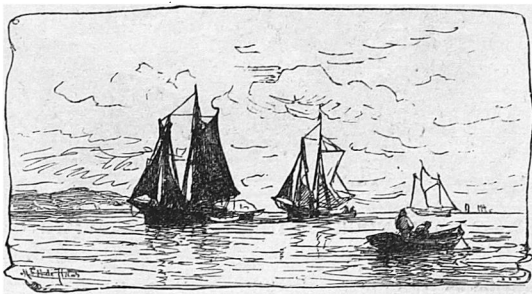
the "Hémicycle" of Paul Delaroche. Out of a hundred and twenty framed pictures, this noble composition holds its grouped heads far above the rest and domi-



58.—MT. WASHINGTON. 16 X 26. GRANVILLE PERKINS.

nates the collection like the strain of a musical instrument heard among the noises of a crowd.

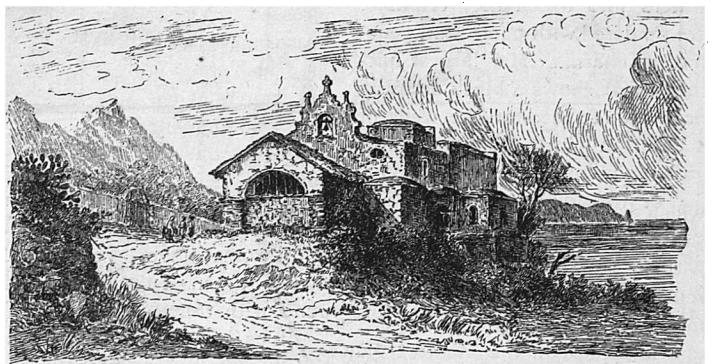
The "Hémicycle," a composition painted by Paul Delaroche in 1837-41, to decorate the semicircular lecture-room of the Beaux-Arts school in Paris, is represented in the Walters collection by a replica finished by the hand of the artist, and corresponding in size with the ample engraving by Henriquel Dupont. It consists of a long frieze or succession of figures representing the artists of all ages and countries, their portraits somewhat ennobled and idealized as befits their present glorified immortality, but always recognizable and based upon historic art-documents. In order to assemble his straying types together, the artist imagines a meeting in the halls of Elysium, partly for judgment, partly for lofty discussion and the resolution of moot questions. The three intelligences whence art started on its divers paths of painting, sculpture, and architec-



146.—FISHING-BOATS OFF THE COAST. 11 X 19. M. F. H. DE HAAS.

ture—the intelligences of Apelles, Phidias, and Ictinus—are enthroned in the midst in a Greek Lesche or portico, and beside these exalted figures, while Fame prepares to throw her wreaths toward the coming com-

petitors of present times, the artists of the past group themselves in tranquil bands, the grand colorists and the sculptors nearer to Phidias, the architects close to the Parthenon-architect Ictinus, while on his side also are ranged the painters who worked rather as collaborators with architects than as colorists—Michael Angelo, Raphael, Leonardo, and Fra Angelico. Besides the ideal figures of the Greek art-trinity, four more spiritualized figures assist at the supposed judgment, from their places beneath the portico—women-forms representing Greek art, Roman art, Gothic art, and the art of the old masters. The scheme is simple and immediately decipherable—the three classic masters of the arts, throned in peace, and looking calmly out as if in pity of the struggles of modern aspirants; their attendants, the four chief epochs of art production; Fame beneath, poising a wreath for the brows of the worthiest; and, stretching out on either side the Ionic portico, so as to form two broad wings for the composition, the grave, calm painters and builders and carvers, imperturbable in the enjoyment of their immortality. But a good scheme might easily have been ruined by false taste in the execution. It was the glory of Delaroche to have invented these attitudes of perfect taste in the frenzied epoch of Delacroix and the "romantiques," to have perpetuated this calm ideal of portraiture in the most Philistine moment of Louis Philippe; to have woven his composition of classic elegance at the time when the modern ceilings of the Louvre were being drenched with inanity by Cogniet, Picot, Heim, Schnetz, and Vernet. The riches of color and shadow, such as Delacroix might have conferred, are not here; Delaroche would have violently rejected such temptations, believing that to cut black holes of shade in his architect's wall would have been an injury to its structural strength. Basing himself upon such relics of antiquity as the friezes and metopes of the Parthenon, as these may have looked when colored, he prepared a composition which, decoratively considered, resembles an embossment of the upright wall of the room, assisting too by its fixed columnar standing figures the apparent supporting power of the architecture. No very heavy shades or deep colors are admitted; the flatness and continuity of the surface is nowhere contradicted.



729.—ISLAND OF ISCHIA. 11 X 18. J. F. HIND.

The students who repair to the gorgeous little lecture-room of the Beaux-Arts to receive prizes, or listen, as I have often done, to the wise discourses of Taine or Heuzey, see, then, the great dead artists collected around them in half-circle, rather larger than life, in a mood of exquisite contentment and tranquillity, conversing and disputing, yet covered with a uniting atmosphere of happiness. Leonardo sits explaining the principles of design to Raphael, with Fra Bartolommeo and Fra Angelico standing by, Michael Angelo sitting morosely apart on a block of carved stone. Poussin, the French Raphael, stands not far off. These were the great masters of composition, who reduced art almost to the level of a science, and they are appropriately thrown together. But where are the hot and stormy spirits who invented chiaroscuro and the raptures of color, the real rhapsodists of art? Where are Rembrandt, and Titian, and Correggio and Velasquez, and Rubens? These innovators are grouped together, as far as possible from the classicists, cohering by the natural selection of like for like. Titian stands like a Venetian doge, and Rembrandt, his sturdy shortness dissimulated by artful shadows and supports, faces him

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